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On September 11, 2001 our nation suffered a great loss -- a loss of life, a loss of property, a loss of security. My family also suffered a great loss -- the loss of my husband and my children's father, Todd Beamer. He was traveling to California for an afternoon business meeting and was scheduled to come home on the redeye flight that very night. Instead, he became a victim of terrorism as his plane, United Airlines Flight 93, was hijacked and then crashed into a field in Shanksville, PA.

Life for David, Andrew, Morgan and me will never be the same. Everyday I experience the pain of realizing my children will only know their wonderful father through pictures and stories. I struggle with the responsibility of raising three small children to adulthood by myself. I cry over the loneliness I feel at losing the companionship which Todd and I shared for a decade. I mourn the loss of the hopes and dreams we had for our family.

There are 3,000 stories like mine -- families with a gaping hole left because of the terrorism of September 11th. As we see pictures of Ground Zero we need to remember that each family is dealing with their own Ground Zero. A vast emptiness where a strong presence once stood in their lives. The cleanup and rebuilding of our lives is tremendously hard work and even done well, will never return our loved ones to us. We resolve to persevere through our grief for the sake of ourselves, our children and our nation, but there is not one of us who wouldn't give up anything to return to September 10th and change the course of history.

While we can't go back in time, we can affect the future. It is imperative that our government, our corporations and our citizens do everything possible to ensure that in a year or two or ten there aren't another 3,000 families suffering as we are. There are many actions our nation can and must take to reduce our vulnerability to future acts of terrorism.

All of this is possible only if we learn from the tragedy of September 11th. But to learn we must remember. We must remember the horrible events of the day, we must remember what led up to them, we must remember the names and stories of those we lost, we must remember the suffering of those left behind.

But as much as we need to remember September 11th to protect ourselves from future evil, we also need to remember it to prepare ourselves for future good. We saw unparalleled good in the heroes of all races, genders and occupations who went to work that day but never returned home. They are our new role models, not because of their athletic ability or financial success, but because of their courageous action motivated only by selfless love for a stranger.

I want my children to grow up in a safer, smarter America than we had on September 10th. I also want them to become people who would make the same selfless choices as so many firefighters, policemen, rescue workers and ordinary citizens did on September 11th. I want them to know that they too have the capacity to be people of such strong moral fiber and character that they would lay down their life for a friend.

It is for these reasons that I strongly support the building of a national Memorial to the Victims of Terrorism in Washington, DC. The presence of such a memorial is crucial to keeping the events of September 11th in our nation's consciousness for years to come. We must do this in order to prevent another such tragedy and to inspire our citizens to heroism in whatever events they face in life.

As an 8th grade student at Copper Beech Middle School in Yorktown, NY I took a trip with my class to Washington, DC as we completed our study of American history for the year. I remember visiting the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier and the Vietnam Memorial and witnessing at both venues a strange silence come over my classmates and me. We had read about the wars the United States was engaged in throughout the 20th century but it was not until we were face to face with the reality of the individuals who had fought and made the ultimate sacrifice in these battles that we appreciated the cost of our safety and freedom as Americans and developed any resolve to maintain it.

It is my hope and expectation that the Memorial to Victims of Terrorism will motivate current and future generations to always be vigilant in protecting us from evil and always be practicing for great acts of heroism. If these lessons of September 11th are learned and remembered, the deaths of our loved ones will not be in vain.

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